

VZCZCXRO8033

OO RUEHAG RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN RUEHLZ
RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHPS #0333/01 1091523
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 191523Z APR 06
FM USOFFICE PRISTINA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6027
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0647
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHFMIUU/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT
RHMFIUU/CDR TF FALCON
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUFOANA/USNIC PRISTINA SR

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000333

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE
NSC FOR BRAUN
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI
DEPT FOR H - PLEASE PASS TO OFFICE OF SENATOR VOINOVICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)
SUBJECT: VISIT OF SENATOR VOINOVICH TO KOSOVO

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. In meetings with Prime Minister Agim Ceku and President Fatmir Sejdiu during his March 24 visit to Kosovo, Senator George Voinovich urged the new leaders to reach out to Kosovo Serbs and to show them and leaders in Belgrade that Kosovo's government is serious about creating a Kosovo in which Serbs and other ethnic minorities can live. In the afternoon he visited US Camp Bondsteel, where he spoke to soldiers who do community liaison work in Kosovo communities. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Ohio Senator George Voinovich visited Kosovo on Friday, March 24. He discussed Kosovo status negotiations, decentralization and the security situation in Kosovo with Prime Minister Agim Ceku, President Fatmir Sejdiu, the Kosovo Unity team (Ceku, Sejdiu, Assembly President Kole Berisha, opposition leaders Vetton Surroi and Hashim Thaci, and coordinator Blerim Shala), Kosovo Serb leaders Oliver Ivanovic, Goran Bogdanovic and Randjel Nojkic, as well as Brigadier General Darren Owens and U.S. soldiers serving at Camp Bondsteel. The Senator was accompanied by USOP Chief of Mission Goldberg, legislative aide Jeannie Siskovic and military escort LT Josh Wellner.

Voinovich Tells Leaders to Convince Serbs of Their Sincerity

13. (SBU) In his meeting with Prime Minister Agim Ceku, Voinovich warned that there are many in Serbia who doubt Kosovo Albanians are serious about creating the kind of Kosovo in which ethnic Serbs can stay and integrate. He told Ceku now is the time to create observable evidence that things on the ground have changed. Ceku stated optimistically that he expects more returns in 2006 than in previous years. Ceku told Voinovich that Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) views monasteries and patriarchal sites not as monuments, but rather as religious communities, and said Kosovo was proud to have such valuable cultural heritage. Ceku said when KFOR completes its restructuring from a brigade to a task force it

will be more flexible and able to react better. He also commended U.S. forces in Kosovo for their work in the local community, which he referred to as a model that other constituent forces, especially in northern Kosovo, should emulate.

14. (SBU) Ceku asked Voinovich to talk to the leadership in Belgrade and convince them to let Kosovo's Serbs integrate into Kosovo instead of keeping them as "hostages". He promised that if Belgrade allows them to participate in Kosovo society and institutions, the Kosovo government would take care of them. Voinovich implored Ceku to "treat Kosovo's Serbs the way they did not treat you" during the time that Slobodan Milosevic was in power. At the end of their meeting, Voinovich said both Serbs and Kosovo Albanians need to realize how sincere Ceku is about protecting the Serb minority in Kosovo.

15. (SBU) Senator Voinovich told President Fatmir Sejdiu of his dream that all of the former Yugoslavia join the EU and NATO, in order to rid the Balkans of the problems of the past. Voinovich said the leaders with whom he had met the previous day in Belgrade do not believe the Kosovo government will follow through on its promises on minority rights. He added for the success of status negotiations currently underway in Vienna, Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority must prove its sincerity. He advised Sejdiu Kosovo's leadership must also change the hearts and minds of the local population. Sejdiu responded that set-asides for minority representation in the Kosovo Assembly and minority hiring in government institutions gives Kosovo's Serbs and other ethnic minorities the opportunity for greater influence in Kosovo's government. Sejdiu added the Kosovo government wants all those who left after the war to return and rejoin Kosovo

PRISTINA 00000333 002 OF 003

society.

16. (SBU) Sejdiu told Voinovich Kosovo must be given the chance to show that it will care for its historic and cultural heritage after final status, and said that before Milosevic came to power, ethnic Albanians had protected the churches and patriarchal sites for hundreds of years. Sejdiu admitted after the war there had been a breakdown of this protection, culminating in the riots of March 2004, but quickly added those events are not indicative of the views of the majority of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population. He said Kosovo's Albanian majority is disquieted by the March riots and said he is sure such events will not be repeated. He told Voinovich there have been arrests and people have been convicted for their participation in the riots. (NOTE. SRSG Jessen-Petersen told Contact Group representatives on April 7 there have been 420 prosecutions, 240 sentences, 100 acquittals and 90 cases pending resulting from the March 2004 riots. END NOTE.)

17. (SBU) Sejdiu promised to continue his outreach efforts in Serb communities. He recounted the day before he met with Serbs in Rahovec/Orahovac who expressed their concerns about economic growth and jobs -- concerns common to everyone in Kosovo. He said the ethnic Albanian majority must create conditions for minorities to have a normal life in Kosovo and, paraphrasing Senator Voinovich's own comments, said minority communities should not experience the same treatment as ethnic Albanians endured during Milosevic's rule. Sejdiu added it is very clear Kosovo is committed to moving forward, noting that while the government put aside five million euros to rebuild Serbian Orthodox churches, it had to rely on international donors for assistance in rebuilding 130 mosques destroyed during the war. He concluded that Kosovo Serbs must return to their homes and join Kosovo society and decision-making.

"Treat the Serbs Better than They Treated You"

¶8. (SBU) Senator Voinovich told the members of the Kosovo Albanian final status negotiating team (aka the "Unity Team") that he had told Kosovo Albanian leaders in 2001 the best "guarantee" they could have of getting independence was to avoid "treating minorities the way they treated you when you were the minority," adding, "I wish you had listened more at the time; you would be further along." The senator applauded the "eloquent statements" of new President Sejdiu and new Prime Minister Ceku but warned there is "a lot of skepticism on whether what you say you are going to do will be done."

¶9. (SBU) Voinovich advised the Kosovo Albanian leaders to adopt a delicate manner in dealing with Kosovo Serbs so moderate leaders in Serbia would not be undermined by radicals who could take over Serbia by alleging things aren't getting better for Kosovo Serbs. He asked them to work to convince Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade that there will be a change.

¶10. (SBU) Blerim Shala replied frankly that, "our focus is the status of Kosovo, not the status of Serbia. We are concerned with Kosovo Serbs, not Serbian Serbs." The senator suggested understanding the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church would prove key to the final status process because the church influences Kosovo Serbs and Serbian Serbs alike. Noting the church had initially refused to cooperate with restoring churches damaged in the 2004 riots because the PISG was also involved, the senator said he had intervened with church leaders and they had responded. The senator urged the Kosovo Albanian leaders to consider that the final status process might go a lot more smoothly "if the church feels comfortable and influences the Serb side of the table."

PRISTINA 00000333 003 OF 003

¶11. (SBU) Voinovich's message over lunch with Kosovo Serbs was simple: you can only benefit from participating in Kosovo's governmental institutions. The current uncertainty that plagues the Kosovo Serb political landscape came to the fore as Goran Bogdanovic, a member of Belgrade's negotiating team, and Randjel Nojkic expressed different views on the future of Kosovo Serbs. Bogdanovic stressed Belgrade's desire that Kosovo not become independent; Nojkic countered by saying no one was asking what Kosovo Serbs wanted. To Voinovich's call for an end to the Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija's (SLKM) boycott of Kosovo's government structures, SLKM head Oliver Ivanovic said they need to be supported (by Belgrade) to participate, or will be called traitors."

¶12. (SBU) Voinovich said it was more important than ever for Kosovo Serbs to specify what they would like the Kosovo government to do for them, but Ivanovic said the situation varies too greatly between those Serbs north of the Ibar River and those living in isolated ethnic Serb communities elsewhere in Kosovo. On decentralization, the Kosovo Serbs pressed Voinovich to comment on Belgrade's funding of municipalities. Voinovich said any funding should be welcomed to ameliorate economic conditions in Kosovo. Ivanovic replied by saying: "What is decentralization going to get us? Segregation or integration? We're not sure what we want."

¶13. (U) Post clears this message in its entirety for release to Special Envoy Ahtisaari.
GOLDBERG